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AUGUST 2021 | VOLUME 12 | ISSUE 8

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Flawed COVID response reveals capitalism's relationship to imminent climate collapse. **Page 8**



MEET YOUR
VENDOR:
**PAULA
ANDERSON,**
PAGE 3

GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



Hope from those
who know. **Page 7**

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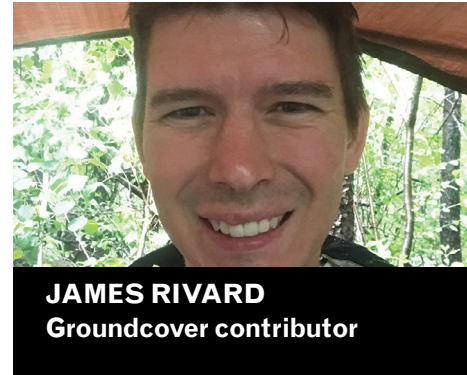
Kroger evicts the Three Ghosts' camp

As April approached, and their existing shelter arrangements came to an end, Jeff and Chris found themselves looking for a place to camp. There was nowhere that they could afford to sleep legally, yet they needed to find a place that would fit their needs while working towards securing housing placements. They found a patch of wooded land between the Radiant Church parking lot and the antenna behind the Kroger off Maple Rd. The spot was covered in trash and polluted by noise from the adjacent M-14 highway, but secluded and close to needed services.

Joined by their friend John and his handsome service dog Jackson, they got to work cleaning up the trash and setting up camp. Through the collection of discarded items, use of their own funds and help from community members, they soon had simple accommodations. Besides tents, the camp had a propane grill, a well-insulated mini-fridge converted into a cooler, a pump sprayer made into a shower, office swivel chairs and a tarp shelter. They hung a sign with a picture of three crosses, identifying them as the "Three Ghosts" on a tree in the middle of camp.

Jeff explained the situation to me. "We're just trying to survive. Each one of us is waiting for something. I didn't get my unemployment or stimulus checks. I lost my birth certificate, social security cards, everything. Now I'm working on getting all that back. With COVID it is twice as hard," he said.

They chose the site behind Kroger because it made the Three Ghosts' lives easier and gave them some control over their environment. The traffic on Maple Rd made for a good place to collect money by flying signs. Kroger provided bathrooms, bottle returns and a place to buy groceries with their Bridge cards and cash. The bus stop provided access to



JAMES RIVARD
Groundcover contributor

transportation. Some of the Three Ghosts are recovering addicts, and the services at the nearby Ann Arbor Comprehensive Treatment Center were critical to their health.

Jeff expressed to me that as a recovering addict, it was important to him to be away from downtown because of his concern that he would be exposed to more drug use there. The matrix of needs that the Three Ghosts Camp location fulfilled made it ideal for these men while they focused on improving their situation.

Besides the initial cleanup of the camp site, the Three Ghosts continued to keep their space clean. They recycled and acted as good stewards of the land they lived on.

"We stopped people from dumping tires in Radiant's parking lot," Jeff said. "We deterred illegal parking and suspicious people. We were like unpaid security guards."

"We did at least \$1000 worth of cleanup work over there," Chris said.

On Thursday, June 10, after over two months of camping, Kroger brought in the AAPD to serve a trespass notice to the Three Ghosts. Kroger never reached out to the campers before the eviction. Initially, Kroger wanted the camp cleared out immediately. Chris spent an hour arguing that they should be given 15 days to move, and eventually the Kroger manager, Joe, capitulated.

I was visiting the camp at the time and spoke to Joe. I provided him with



After evicting Three Ghosts, Kroger bulldozed the area where they stayed. Pictured above is a photo of the campsite before (left) and after (right) it was cleared.

my contact information, asked him to reconsider allowing the camp to remain and offered to organize a group to mediate any conflicts between Kroger and the camp. He never reached out to me. Within the 15 day grace period, I worked with Wash-tenaw Camp Outreach (WCO) to transport the Three Ghost's belongings to a new site.

Given my positive impression of Jeff, Chris, John and Jackson, recognition of their right to have a place to live, and Kroger's unwillingness to work towards a humane solution, I was angry, and I had a lot of questions. I reached out to Kroger, Radiant Church, and the Ann Arbor City Council representative for the 5th Ward (where the camp is located) to try to understand what led to Kroger's hostility. The store manager Joe had already transferred to another store, so I got in touch with the new manager who refused to answer any questions or to provide contact information for Joe. I also reached out to Kroger

corporate and Radiant Church, before publication time, neither responded.

Council member Erica Briggs was responsive. She explained to me that there were many complaints about homeless people in the area around Kroger from nearby residents, customers, and staff at Kroger and Radiant Church. One complaint was that a member of the camp had threatened to kill a property owner who was putting up "No Trespassing" signs near the camp. When I asked the Three Ghosts about the truth of this accusation, they all had a straight, consistent story contradicting the accusation. According to them, this property owner had insinuated that he would shoot them, and then started to goad them into assaulting him.

They understandably became angry and exchanged words, but deny ever threatening to kill him. The property owner eventually resorted to calling

see **KROGER** page 11 ➡

GROUNDCOVER

Mission

Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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MEET YOUR VENDOR



Paula Anderson,
vendor No. 157

In one sentence, who are you?

A seasoned Groundcover vendor.

Where do you usually sell Groundcover News?

Bethlehem United Church of Christ.

What is your favorite thing to do in Ann Arbor?

Stay home.

What is something about you that someone on the street wouldn't know?

The truth. Put up with no lies!

What is your favorite spot in Ann Arbor?

My church.

What motivates you to work hard selling Groundcover News?

We help the homeless.

What was your first job?

Waitressing at Cloverleaf.

What is the best way to start the day?

Coffee.

What are your hobbies?

Bingo.

What song do you have completely memorized?

"Let it Be" by The Beatles.

If you had a warning label, what would it say?

Wear a mask!!!

Boober Tours faces challenges upgrading motors

Although Boober Tours has been excelling in many ways, there have been a few road bumps for us recently. Our challenge these days is not having enough motors for the pedicab crew. We lost two of the Bafang motors, which we do not like because their longevity is not as strong as our Cyclone motors. We also like the Cyclones because we can govern them to the top speed of 12 miles per hour. The speed limit for electric bikes is 19 mph but we think 12 mph is the safest speed for pedicabs. It also results in minimal maintenance on the motors.

We also have a lot of chain challenges. We can not get them because there is a parts shortage so we are constantly repairing chains



KEVIN SPANGLER
Groundcover vendor No. 307

and having to take chains off other bikes. We are learning how to be resourceful and are looking for heavier-duty designs.

We are trying to develop a product that takes less maintenance so eventually regular people will be able to own their own cabs and

work for themselves on the Go Boober app.

Sometimes we have challenges but they are learning experiences. We are thinking ahead. We ordered another 12 batteries and nine more motors. We get them from China and the prices are going through the roof. They tell me it is because the steel shipping containers they come in are not being sent back from America so they need to buy more of them. This seems to be related to the pandemic and a shortage of workers.

Our *Go Boober* app is going extremely well. We are getting two to six rides a day from app users. We are seeing regulars. It's amazing to see what we have achieved!

I'm Liquefied

LA SHAWN COURTWRIGHT
Groundcover vendor No. 56

Sometimes I'm so Liquefied
By the divides
of what's
supposed to be
a single freedom
one whole liberty
I'm so Fly,
I still have
my high school figure
Yet, I'm All all
Woman!!
Not the same
young lady
I've evolved
My resolve is
to only live life
Unite with my lost,
and broken family
That's if it's their
choice to choose too!
My devastation comes
through my pen
When I write a poem,
a book, yes, a play,
and my own songs!!!
See when I'm
Liquefied
By the braces of the world
that seems to choose
to try and hold me.
I'm Liquefied
Doin MY THING!!!

Beautiful bunnies

DENISE SHEARER
Groundcover vendor No. 485

Bunnies are interesting, pleasant pets. They are so beautiful and cute. Bunnies are soft and cuddly. Bunnies are pleasant to have and see. Toy bunnies and real bunnies are both pleasant. Bunnies are good to see outside when they are wild and free. I love to celebrate bunnies in the wintertime and in the summertime. Bunnies are interesting, pleasant pets.

Rest easy, Terry



On July 17, Groundcover vendor No. 526 Terry McAuley passed unexpectedly at age 53. Terry regularly hung out on the corner of West Huron St. and 4th St. — surrounded constantly by a circle of folks. One of his close friends, Groundcover vendor B-Man Browning, will remember him as "a kind hearted, funny guy, who always looked out for me." When recounting some memories with Terry, B-Man said, "I once was stranded and out of gas; Terry wouldn't let me stay stranded. He gave me \$40 even though he was struggling too. He always was so generous without expecting anything back." He will be missed dearly by his Groundcover family. Rest easy, Terry.

Flawed COVID response reveals capitalism's relationship to imminent climate collapse

As of June 22, the Michigan state government lifted all COVID-19 related restrictions. Naturally, many Michiganders concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic is over. It isn't. True, some parts of the United States have vaccination rates approaching herd immunity, but in stark contrast, the vast majority of the globe's population is still without access to the vaccine. The surging cases, especially in the most densely populated areas, correlate with further mutations, potentially producing an even more contagious and dangerous variant that could eventually be resistant to the current vaccines. However, this is not what worries me the most.

While deadly, killing over four million people worldwide, 600,000 in the USA alone, COVID-19 is not an existential threat to human civilization. Climate change is. And I fear, as a society, we may not be capable of dealing with the urgent degradation of our living world and the accompanying geopolitical conflicts that will result from resource scarcity and mass migration. Humanity's overall inadequate and inequitable response to the acute global emergency of an international pandemic doesn't bode well for our response to the urgent existential threat of climate change, where the latency period can extend for fifteen years or more. We have, for decades, ignored all the warnings. It may very well be our civilization's doom.

I know. I sound like an irate street preacher on a wooden soapbox shouting through a bullhorn, "The end is nigh!" to the rolling eyes of pedestrians walking by. Unfortunately, I am not alone in my grave consternation. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists is a group of international experts on nuclear technology and climate science, who have for the last 75 years assessed the existential threat to humanity and reported the level of threat as time until midnight on the Doomsday clock. They announced earlier this year that they are setting the clock to 100 seconds before midnight. This is tied with last year, 2020, as the closest the Bulletin has ranked humanity to total catastrophe. This was part of their 2021 statement, "The pandemic revealed just how unprepared and unwilling countries and the international system are to handle global emergencies properly. In this time of genuine crisis, governments too often abdicated responsibility, ignored scientific advice, did not



BEN GIRODIAS
Groundcover contributor

cooperate or communicate effectively, and consequently failed to protect the health and welfare of their citizens."

In other words, when the imminent existential threats of climate change and nuclear warfare challenge our society's continued existence, collectively the world's governments will probably screw up.

Humanity's overall inadequate and inequitable response to the acute global emergency of an international pandemic doesn't bode well for our response to the urgent existential threat of climate change.

And the consequences couldn't be direr. For decades, scientists have warned government leaders about the devastating consequences of climate change that could occur if we do not significantly reduce our carbon emissions. The burning of fossil fuels and clearing of forests for agriculture has resulted in a massive spike in CO2 atmospheric concentration, unprecedented in the last 800,000 thousand years based on ice core data. This sudden change significantly alters our planet at rates unheard of on a geological scale, causing extreme heat, submerged coastlines, mass migration, coral reef death, and reduced life abundance among other effects.

While world leaders have met to create treaties to address the issue of climate change, even the most recent both unambitious and nonbinding Paris Climate Agreement failed to take substantial steps to avoid climate disaster. The goal of the Paris Climate Agreement was to keep the global temperature rise to less than two degrees centigrade above industrial levels. Even this, though, has substantial consequences, particularly for the global south - the nations that have

historically polluted almost nothing compared to that of the wealthy nations. Moreover, at current rates of emission, we aren't even projected to meet these loose standards.

So why don't we act? While this complicated question cannot elicit a concise response without many gross oversimplifications, I believe the inaction can be mainly attributed to the following three main factors: mass misinformation campaigns spread through uncritical social media consumption; the unperturbed, insatiable growth of capitalistic economies; and the heartless indifference of the secure political-economy elites to the plight of everyone else. There are many tragic parallels in the response to the pandemic.

We live in an information age, where the internet floods us daily with an unprocessable amount of information. Taken uncritically, our perception of reality itself becomes greatly distorted. Social media and mass media conglomerates exist to get more clicks: these businesses profit from the ad revenue they receive from traffic or viewership. Powerful machine algorithms, like the ones that suggest videos on YouTube, are carefully calibrated to get the person to keep watching - regardless of content. This has spawned rampant false narratives with real-world consequences. Worse, targeted ad campaigns can sway the public's opinion, reducing trust in experts.

This results in ineffective policy, endangering us all, in particular when malicious powerful agents act in greedy self-interest. And this is what is happening now. Because fossil fuel companies stand to lose staggering profits by a transition to renewable sources, they have purposely spread misleading information, denying the existence of climate change. This lends to confusion and holds back public-driven change. We cannot respond to a threat we refuse to acknowledge.

Moreover, we saw during the pandemic a persistent political force that propelled our unjust economy to get back to normal operating procedures immediately, the workers be damned. The initial lockdowns intended to flatten the curve thereby reducing the spread of the virus so as not to overwhelm the healthcare system, stalled the economy. Almost immediately, especially after the stock market crash, numerous politicians demanded the economy be reopened no matter the consequences to public health. This hardline opposition illustrates that even a short pause has substantial

consequences for our current economy and its main benefactors - wealthy shareholders. And it also illustrates the problem with capitalism from an ecological perspective - it necessitates infinite growth.

However, a finite Earth with limited resources can not support infinite economic growth.

And even with dramatic technological advancement, it still remains doubtful that such a political economy could address climate change effectively. As technology efficiency improves, the capitalistic system tends toward more consumption, effectively nullifying the reduced emissions that came from the improved efficiency. This is known as the direct and indirect rebound effects. For example, as planes became more fuel-efficient, the ticket price decreased, which led to more travelers and more planes burning more fuel. Or indirectly, when people save money driving a more fuel-efficient vehicle, they then spend that money on other CO2 emission-intensive activities, such as more plane trips or more products.

The few people with the power to reduce the suffering of the powerless are the same people least affected by the dangerous consequences.

The world's population is increasing, and this rising number of people, especially in developing economies, are increasing their rates of consumption. The only way we can reduce emission levels, therefore, is to reduce consumption, something wholly incompatible with the immense societal pressure to consume.

Then there is the lack of political will from the economic elites who profit immensely off an inherently unstable and unethical system. We saw this, too, during the COVID pandemic. Summarized nicely, it was said that we are all in the same storm but different boats. The formally unskilled workers, now rebranded as essential workers (minimal to no hazard pay for many), were obligated to continue working in high-risk environments because their work was deemed essential. On the other hand, the wealthy could insulate themselves, doing much of their work online.

see **RESPONSE** next page ➡

Sudoku

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2		1	3		9	7		4
4		3	5		8	1		2
		2	8	7		3	9	4
	4	5	6		2	8	3	
3		2	1		7	6		9
5		7	8		6	4		3

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

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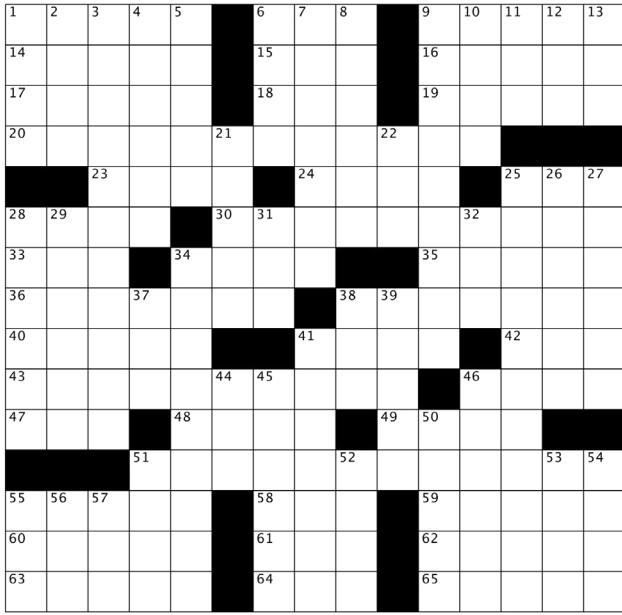
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Hit Parade Peter A. Collins

- ACROSS
- Closings in scores
 - Degree after an M.A., perhaps
 - Furious
 - Klutzy
 - "—Haw"
 - "Porgy and Bess," for one
 - Salami variety
 - Kind
 - Worked on skis, in a way
 - Like most newspaper articles
 - Scream
 - Eggy dessert
 - Big Rapids or Tallahassee sch.
 - Unspecified amount
 - Blackjack player's option
 - The Common Market: Abbr.
 - Class ring?
 - Casanova types
 - Simpleton
 - Biblical fruit provider
 - Effectiveness
 - Like venison, often
 - New Deal agcy.
 - Track and field event
 - Brewery oven
 - "I should ___ die with pity" (King Lear)
 - Secluded spot
 - Uncomplicated
 - TV character who said "I never apologize. I'm sorry, that's just the way I am."
 - L.L. Bean competitor
 - One of Pooh's pals
 - One ___ (not many)
 - Future oak tree
 - Popular Web portal
 - Bright aquarium fish
 - Tiny bugs
 - Texter's "Keep the details to yourself"
 - Kind of moth

- DOWN
- Camels, for short



Peter A. Collins

- "The ___ Love" (R.E.M. hit)
- Last M.L.B. 30-game winner
- Highest point
- Art Fair unit
- Some sorority letters
- Accommodating
- Home of Northern Illinois University
- Sluggish
- Apple Store buy
- Confound
- Intense anger
- Pop
- More advanced in years
- Ripken who played 2,632 straight games
- Traffic circle alternative
- Chimney cleaners
- Defeat, as an incumbent
- Unruffled
- Body of work
- Word with hat or school
- "I" piece?
- Some prom purchases
- Sass
- Ma, Pa, Sis, and Bro
- Rock & Roll Hall of Fame architect
- Armory
- Nightmare street of movies
- Make fun of
- Fish-hunting bird
- In the midst of
- Where the buck stops
- Songs sung alone
- Defeats regularly, in sports lingo
- Overly inquisitive
- Bread spread
- Roman 201
- Deteriorate

➡ **RESPONSE** from previous page

And this is the crux of the issue. The few people with the power to reduce the suffering of the powerless are the same people least affected by the dangerous consequences.

CO2 emissions scale drastically with affluence. The ultrawealthy, who have an unrepresentative, large influence in policy, resist many climate initiatives because they substantially profit from a CO2-intensive economy, and are the same people who can insulate themselves from the most disastrous consequences of climate change. If a coastal city floods, they have the money to buy a new home elsewhere, despite the likely increased housing demand. They can outbid others in the case of food or electricity shortages. Or, as exemplified by the severe heat waves the Pacific Northwest felt last month, they can afford to install and use air conditioning.

The major polluters profit the most and face the fewest consequences. And due to the increasingly corrupt campaign financing system, they tend to get their way with direct access to government representatives, reducing the likelihood of effective policy to halt climate change. In the end, everyone else suffers.

Nothing could be more illustrative

of this runaway greed and callousness than that displayed by the ruling class during the COVID-19 pandemic. Working-class families suffered the loss of loved ones due to an inadequate government response that was hamstringed by misinformation spread through social media and the political pressures of shareholders to keep the New York Stock Exchange numbers going up. Meanwhile, the same ultrawealthy who pushed for unsafe policy, siphoned off far more than they could ever possibly need from struggling families.

2020 was marred by an unprecedented level of wealth transfer from the lower to the upper class. Undoubtedly, the expanded unemployment checks and economic impact payments (stimulus checks), provided a lifeline to many working-class families. This, however, is mere pennies compared to the trillions taken by the 1%. And during all of this suffering and desperation, let me remind you that two of these criminally wealthy monsters were engaged in a race to be the first into space which was, essentially, an extra-planetary ego contest, and amounts to the 21st-century version of Emperor Nero strumming his lute as Rome burns in the background.

Be angry.

Pet Pals Mutual Aid: We all deserve happy, healthy pets

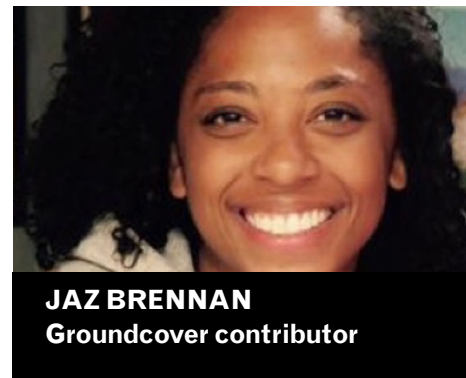
Many of us know the great benefits that animals can bring to our lives. The connection we make with our furry, scaly or even feathery friends is one of a kind and individual to each pair. We work hard to share our lives with these beings, providing shelter, safety and other basic needs. However, when we are, at times, in need ourselves, it can be difficult to tend to our companions on our own.

That's why over the last year, Washtenaw County Pet Pals Mutual Aid was developed. This group of local advocates understands the important role animals play in our everyday lives and works to provide resources such as food, litter, toys and — at times vet services — to the community.

The group started out of the “dreamin’ and schemin’” of Sheri Wander and Lisa Gizzi out of Peace House Ypsilanti, a local mutual aid home. Both women noticed that people were requesting animal supplies and having to let go of their pets when they weren't finding those supplies. So, Wander and Gizzi jumped into action, pulling together a small group of invested folks throughout the community. This group has connected with local shelters, veterinarians, pet stores and animal specialists to help provide people with the education, supplies and healthcare they need for their animals.

“[Pet Pals Mutual Aid] is about reaching across instead of down,” Gizzi stated. “It's not about charity, but neighbors supporting one another and connecting to what's available throughout the community.”

Sheri Wander, who runs Peace House Ypsi, reports feeling surprised by the rapid growth of the group. While she



JAZ BRENNAN
Groundcover contributor

recognized there was a need, there was no telling how important it was.

“The community has been wonderful with regard to circulating supplies and staples like food, toys, litter, etc. and the Humane Society has been so generous in providing vouchers for spays and neuters.”

For the future of Pet Pals, Wander would like to see the group develop a fund for emergencies. This could look like cash funds set aside to be used as needed, or more expansively, a connection to local vet clinics who would work with community members on various payment systems, sliding scales or even volunteer hours.

“So many people live hand to mouth that when your pet has health needs, they end up having to give them away due to high expenses,” Wander said.

Wander touched upon a narrative that has been present within our culture for a while: only the rich can keep animals and if you're poor, you don't deserve to have pets. Part of Wander's mission is to deconstruct this fiction and change misperceptions and judgments.

“People don't always understand why folks won't give away pets to go to a [homeless] shelter, or get pets when



living in poverty. Pets are our therapists, exercise coaches and safe spaces. They change the quality of our lives exponentially — and we all deserve that,” Wander said.

In this time of public health crisis, social and civil unrest and great expansion of consciousness, it is lovely to know and see the ways in which people are taking small actions to make big changes in our communities. Mutual aid efforts have arisen throughout the country and continue to show us that everything is malleable and there's always the potential for change.

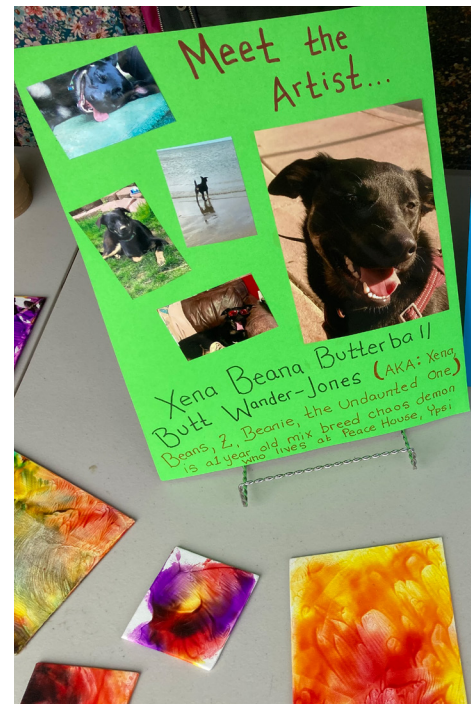
“The benefit of mutual aid is finding community and meeting like-minded people,” Gizzi said. “Leading this kind of life and knowing there can be a different way of doing things.”

Pet Pals Mutual Aid does pet supply pickups from Thursdays to Sunday mornings. Items are labeled and placed at 706 Davis Ypsilanti, MI, 48198 for pick up. Deliveries are available when volunteers are present. To request supplies, find Pet Pals Mutual Aid on Facebook and send them a message.

Pet Pals is also currently in search of more volunteers to assist with building this program along with similar models in neighborhoods throughout the county. For more information, please seek out Pet Pals Mutual Aid on

Facebook.

Special thanks go out to the Huron Valley Humane Society, Wags to Wiskers Ann Arbor and Chelsea, and all the other community players, individual and corporate, who assist in making this group all that it is. Thank you to Sheri, Lisa, Mary, Karen and Zahara for the work you do — you are rockstars!



Pet Pals Mutual Aid raised money in May by selling art work "painted" by Xena, the puppy of co-founder Sheri Wander.

Hope from those who know: Lend a Hand, NAMI Washtenaw County

TRACY HARRIS
NAMI member

NAMI Washtenaw County is a local affiliate of NAMI — the National Alliance on Mental Illness. NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

What started as a small group of families gathered around a kitchen table in 1979 has blossomed into the nation's leading voice on mental health. Today, NAMI is an alliance of more than 600 local affiliates and 48 state organizations who work in communities nationwide to raise awareness and provide support and education that was not previously available to those in need.

NAMI provides advocacy, education, support, and public awareness so that all individuals and families affected by mental illness can build better lives.

NAMI Washtenaw County was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in 1984. Guided by NAMI's core principles, we provide support and advocacy for all individuals affected by mental illness and their families. Our services are offered at no-cost to participants. Like Groundcover News, NAMI WC shares a passion for providing an “opportunity and a voice” for those facing mental health challenges.

NAMI Washtenaw County relies heavily on volunteers who assist in all aspects of the organization:

- Lead Peer-to-Peer and Family-to-Family education programs.
- Facilitate support groups.
- Speak in hospitals, schools, churches, and other venues about personal experiences living with a mental health condition or living in support of someone who does.
- Attend mental health court to help individuals navigate the criminal justice system.
- Prepare and contribute articles to the online newsletter.
- Exchange brochures and flyers with partner organizations, such as Ozone House, the Eisenberg Depression Center, and Washtenaw County Community Mental Health.
- Staff NAMI information booths at public events.
- Participate in fundraising activities including the annual NAMI 5K Walk on Belle Isle in Detroit.
- Support NAMI WC staff with office administration duties.

As the number of people wanting to

help in the office kept increasing, there was a need to accommodate more volunteers. In early 2019, office manager, Barb Higman, and former EMU Social Work professor, Marilyn Wedenoja, launched the Lend a Hand volunteer group that met weekly to take on a variety of tasks and projects including assembling manuals for NAMI WC's Peer-to-Peer educational program and preparing information packets for Washtenaw County Community Mental Health's new CARES program.

By the end of March 2020, the COVID-19 quarantine made meeting in person impossible. Instead, Lend a Hand began meeting virtually. Hands-on projects were supplanted by brainstorming sessions. The goal of these sessions was to make NAMI and mental health assistance more accessible and visible to the community. Lend a Hand became a perfect tool for NAMI WC outreach projects. This also gave the group much-needed human interaction that is invaluable to all people, especially those with mental health conditions.

In the past year, Lend a Hand already completed numerous projects including:

- Composing and submitting grant applications.
- Creating a PSA graphic for multiple uses such as bus inserts, posters and flyers.
- Displaying our PSA on EMU's digital signs.
- Our current article for Groundcover News.
- Creating and distributing a survey on how we can improve our outreach efforts.

Future projects include:

- Writing articles for our monthly NAMI WC newsletter and *The Ann Arbor Observer*.
- Preparing an interview for the Lucy Ann Lance radio talk show.
- Organizing a rock painting event where river rocks will be decorated with positive messages and NAMI WC information and placed in local parks.
- Setting up information booths at upcoming public events.
- Improving connections with young people, the BIPOC community and underrepresented communities in the mental health space.
- Tracking our progress with improved data analysis.



Barb Higman (Leader of Lend a Hand), Adam Alkhouly, Rusty Sprauer, Stephanie Roth, Sandy Gale and Mike Dolan meet for a NAMI Zoom discussion. Team members not pictured: Alayna Manzanares, Annice Siders, Kimberly Sanders, Maria Alfonso, Noah Perrin, Tracy Harris and Andrew Fyles.

Meet our Members

Tracy Harris, retired U-M executive assistant

I suffer from debilitating panic attacks, anxiety, clinical depression and agoraphobia and NAMI has saved my life. I was in treatment at the Chelsea Hospital when NAMI WC volunteers came in and spoke about what type of classes and support groups they offer. They passed out flyers and left.

I didn't even look at the flyer.

It was my third time at Chelsea and this time I was in rough shape. It wasn't until a couple of months later I received a call from NAMI WC to see how I was. At first, I blew it off. Then I was contacted again. That's when my involvement with NAMI started.

I met with our wonderful volunteer coordinator and discussed volunteer opportunities, but I already knew what I wanted to do before I walked in the doors. I wanted to visit hospitals and talk about NAMI and hopefully help people as they helped me. I ended up doing that for a couple of months but wasn't ready mentally for that type of challenge.

I have taken Peer-to-Peer and then joined Lend a Hand. At first, it was just to get out of the house and be around people like me. We stuffed folders, made copies, and assisted in basic office operations. Then COVID-19 hit and I figured it was over with Lend a Hand, but then the group moved to Zoom.

Since I have been with NAMI WC, I have watched a change in our group that has been so intriguing to see. Lend a Hand has become one of NAMI WC's leading committees. Other groups come to Lend a Hand for help with their projects, whether it's to get our opinion or other assistance.

I have thrown myself totally into my NAMI work because I care passionately. I care about my friends in the group. I care about people with mental health issues getting quality care. I care about changing the stigma. I care so deeply as

I am one of those people.

I want to take every person hurting from a mental illness, or families affected by someone with a mental illness, and just hug them and tell them it's going to be OK. I envision a world that doesn't stigmatize me or people with a mental illness but rather embraces us. I hope by being a part of NAMI and Lend a Hand I can help this vision come true.

Barb Higman, NAMI WC office manager

I have been living with a serious

see NAMI page 11 ➔



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Bethlehem Church is home of the Groundcover office



AUGUST 2021 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

In person events are just starting to resume at BUCC. We ask that you visit the church website at: bethlehem-ucc.org for the most up-to-date calendar and event information.



Sunday Worship Times

10:00 am In-person
and via Radio Broadcast
WAAM 1600 AM



St. Francis invites you

to come and meet Christ Jesus
who loves each one of us and who
is really present here to save us.

*"If God were your Father, you would love me,
for I came from God and am here;
I did not come on my own, but he sent me."
+ Christ Jesus (John 8:42)*

Mass Times:

Saturday Vigil 5 pm & 7 pm (español);

Sunday 8:30am, 10:30am, 12:30pm.

Daily Mon-Fri at 9:15am; Thurs Mass is

followed by a Holy Hour.

Spanish: stfrancisa2.com/misa

English: stfrancisa2.com/mass

Avalon resident board member Kelly Moore advocates for her community

ELLEN RUSTEN
Groundcover contributor



Kelly Moore is a member of Avalon's Voices of Community Advocates and Leaders

About twelve or thirteen years ago, I attended about four Avalon Housing Board of Trustee meetings. Back then, the resident member was always absent.

That's not happening this year. Since December 2019, Avalon tenant and new resident representative Kelly Moore has been attending the Board of Trustee meetings faithfully. Avalon Housing is a housing-first, low-income property management company that provides supportive housing services in Washtenaw County.

Moore has been housed in an Avalon property for 16 years. She is also a member of Avalon's Voices of Community Advocates and Leaders (VOCAL).

"It was always on my bucket list [to be on the Board]," Moore said. "I was always too busy working" to volunteer.

This mother of two has a deep

In fact, the only times she couldn't attend meetings was when she came down with COVID-19 and was debilitated for three months. She caught the virus in December and missed two meetings.

"Board members were very understanding and the [Board] president even called to check on me," the 39-year-old said. "It messed with my heart. I was hospitalized a few times," Moore said.

She has taken other issues to the Board for residents. One was a problem with Ann Arbor transportation. "And then there are the occasional neighborhood conflicts," she said, "and technical issues for families and school." She sees her role as a problem solver for residents.

"I'm very proud of just being that voice for [tenants]. It's very important to have resident representation [on the Board]," Moore said.

"Board members are good, and they know what they are doing. They like interacting with residents," Moore said. When it comes to issues where

there might be conflict, the members "all try to figure it out. There's never been any clash," Moore said.

Moore said she is looking forward to helping Avalon grow. There are real estate development opportunities coming up because of the passage of Proposal C. She worked to help get that passed last year. Now she gets to offer suggestions on how best to implement it.

Moore can help current residents with problems, but she can only advise people looking for permanent housing to work their way through the application process with Housing Access for Washtenaw County.

Community members and Avalon residents can get in touch with her in two ways. Residents can ask their Housing Support Coordinators to connect with Moore.

Avalon's Board of Trustees meets every other month — currently by Zoom. Contact Avalon Housing at 734-663-5858 to find out how to participate in the next meeting or to get copies of the meeting minutes.

Bad words

KEN PARKS AKA STANDING ON THE ROCK
Groundcover vendor No. 490

Author's note: After this submission, I found an offer from the co-op to consider restorative justice work with the Conflict Resolution Center. We have yet to confirm a session.

The June letter to the editor by Anonymous was a response to some of my published work and probably my participation in a People's Food Co-op board meeting, in May, I believe.

I had just received a trespass notice, issued September 13, 2020, on the sidewalk as I was leaving the store. When I asked the police the reason for the trespass notice they told me I had said a bad word. I asked what bad word and they replied "the n-word." I replied that I don't use that word. They told me someone had come out behind me and pointed to me as the offender.

I am busy with many projects and this new one has me overextended. It took some investigating and reflection with Gaia Kile, who was on the Co-op board for 10 years, to come up with a phrase I sometimes use. I have been called dirty old white man (DOWM). Gaia said the report he got was that I said "dirty old white n-word."

I admit that I said DOWM to a clerk, Roy, I believe. It is possible that I had a total loss of consciousness and have no memory of what I said. It is also possible that the clerk heard something different from what I said.

The best way to resolve disputes is on the spot. If people are trained to go up a chain of command, dispute resolution becomes impossible if an

authority takes a punitive measure as the first and only action to deal with a complaint. Due process is trashed. The right to face your accuser is violated. Member-owners should never be given a trespass notice without some mediation.

I have spent hours amounting to several days talking with the co-op manager Angie and others. We need a co-op ethic that includes the important work of communication and conflict resolution. I offered my best admission of responsibility when I formally announced something like, "I am sorry for any pain that Roy suffered in my attempt to communicate."

I have not heard back from the co-op. This is another wound for me in the long struggle for peace and justice. The problems we cause for ourselves are at the heart of why we do not have a significant working-class movement in the United States. We can learn from intellectual workers at home and abroad, Bill Fletcher Jr. and his current study of Tecumseh and our current situation.

Writing this is part of my healing. I hope it contributes to yours as we approach the 50th anniversary of the People's Food Co-op. We have much to learn. If we face ourselves we can embrace who we are and see the world in an indigenous-centered harmony that transcends the colonization that began with private property and the many kinds of slavery that followed. Richard Werner shows how loans create money out of nothing. Debt slavery and wage slavery are failing social constructs. Time to seize this moment with revolutionary responsibility. May all beings benefit.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Size	Black and White	Color	Approx. Size (W x H)
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1/8	\$89.95	\$129.95	5 x 3 or 2.5 x 6.5
1/6	\$129.95	\$165.95	5 x 4
1/4	\$159.95	\$215.95	5 x 6.25
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Full Page	\$495.95	\$669.95	10.25 x 13

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While Groundcover is a non-profit, and paper vendors are self-employed contractors, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following is our **Vendor Code of Conduct**, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

- Groundcover will be distributed for a voluntary donation. I agree not to ask for more than the cover price or solicit donations by any other means.

- **When selling Groundcover, I will always have the current monthly issue of Groundcover available for customer purchase.**

- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper or selling past monthly issues.

- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers and refrain from wearing it or other Groundcover gear when engaged in other activities.

- **I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcover**

vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

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- I will not sell Groundcover under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.

- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.

- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover.

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- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor in downtown areas. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

- I understand that Groundcover strives to be a paper that covers topics of homelessness and poverty while providing sources of income for the homeless. I will try to help in this effort and spread the word.

If you would like to like to report a violation of the Vendor Code please email contact@groundcovernews.com or fill out the contact form on our website.

GROUND COVER NEWS VOLUNTEER MEETING!

Interested in writing, proofreading or helping out at the office?
Have an idea or project that you want to get working on?

All our welcome to join!

Thursday, August 26th, 5:30pm
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RENTAL ASSISTANCE



UTILITY ASSISTANCE



INTERNET ASSISTANCE

The COVID Emergency Relief Assistance (CERA) program provides funding for housing (rent), utilities, and internet assistance to qualifying* individuals and families.

*Based on eligibility requirements set by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

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Tenant user guide available at bit.ly/WC-CERA.



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Rental and utility relief assistance funds are available now!

The Federal CDC Eviction Moratorium will end on July 31, but assistance funds are available to help qualifying households in Washtenaw County who continue to face pandemic-related hardships in avoiding eviction through the COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program. CERA is available for income eligible households in Washtenaw County who have fallen behind on your rent, utility, and/or internet bills during COVID-19.

Learn more at washtenaw.org/3421/CERA.

A community update on Washtenaw County's equity policy and planning

*"Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time."*

— Henry Wadsworth
Longfellow, *A Psalm of Life*

In 2015, Washtenaw County governmental leaders held an equity summit where the topic of discussion was advancing racial equity in Washtenaw County. The key county government representative at the summit was Felicia Brabec, Washtenaw County Commissioner. The summit was successful in providing definitions for issues such as racism, racial equity, equity, inequality — to mention a few. The summit also provided metrics of disparities in health access, health outcome, and affordable housing. They also analyzed the significant income and economic opportunity gaps between zip codes in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti.

With the assistance of the county planners, Brabec gave key reasons for enacting and implementing an equity ordinance in Washtenaw County: "Sixty percent of African Americans live in low opportunity areas; nine years difference in life-expectancy between 48104 zip code and 48198 zip code, 16 years gap in life-expectancy for Latino men; African American babies are twice as likely to be born at a low birth weight and 6 times more likely to grow up in poverty, and Latino children are 3 times more likely to grow up in poverty."

Because of Michigan Medicine and St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, "Washtenaw County ranked #1 in Michigan for health factors. Ann Arbor ranked #1 as the most educated city in America; Ann Arbor ranked #6 for cities that are secretly great for tech graduates; Ann Arbor ranked #3 as the hottest housing market in the country; ranked #5 among green cities for families; and ranked as the #1 city for Millennials. Conversely, Michigan data shows that only three counties in Michigan have more income inequality within their borders than Washtenaw County; Washtenaw had a racial wealth gap of more than 30-40 points in students test scores; Ann Arbor was ranked #8 among the most economically segregated cities in America; Washtenaw County is the most expensive rental market in Michigan, and in the bottom 8% for upward income mobility."

It was obvious that the ship of the



WILL SHAKESPEARE
Groundcover vendor No. 258

municipal government and the ship of the county government were sailing in different directions. What is the remedy? Should the city and the county engage in more effective communication, collaboration and cooperation on equity initiatives?

Prior to the 2015 equity summit, the county's Office of Community and Economic Development published the report Housing Affordability and Economic Equity Analysis and released the Washtenaw County Opportunity Index. The county government also joined the Government Alliance on Race and Equity. The Equity Summit planners described GARE as a national network of government working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunity for all. GARE recommends six implementation actions:

1. Use a racial equity framework
2. Build organizational capacity
3. Implement racial equity tools
4. Strive to be data-driven
5. Partner with other institutions
6. Operate with urgency and accountability

Community updates following the Equity Summit and the Equity Ordinance

After the summit, a range of decisions and actions were undertaken. In partnership with the City of Ann Arbor, the county government issued a contract to GARE for seven training sessions on equity. Approximately 80 county staff members participated, including those in leadership positions. A temporary racial equity analyst, Anna Lemler, was hired to help coordinate the equity planning efforts, and assist in the design of a racial equity office, and of course, the hiring of a racial equity officer. On August 8, 2018, Brabec sent a comprehensive memo requesting the Board of Commissioners act on her equity ordinance proposal. The commissioners



Felicia Braebac, Former Washtenaw County Commissioner proposed the County Equity Ordinance in 2015 and pushed its passage in 2018.

passed the equity ordinance with enthusiasm and gratitude.

A few months later, a task force on equity implementation was created. On July 11, 2019, the county government announced the hiring of the first racial equity officer — Alize Asberry Payne. She has been working with the county health officers, local community groups and all units of Washtenaw County government to narrow racial gaps and improve the quality of life and the circumstances of living in underserved communities of color.

The Equity Summit and the Equity Ordinance have begun to make huge tidal waves across the county. This year, the United Way of Washtenaw County undertook a 21-day equity challenge from June 19 to July 9 and posted their journey under the hashtag #UNITEDFOREQUITY. The United Way Equity Challenge planners said, "We believe it benefits us all to have greater collective capacity and courage to identify and address the different ways that bias, prejudice, privilege, and oppression show up in our work and lives."

Although the City of Ann Arbor collaborated with Washtenaw County to produce the One Community equity initiative, the city leaders have also recently proposed an Equitable Engagement Initiative. The goal of this proposal is to help the city to become more inclusive "by developing a set of community engagement policies, tools, and practices that can be part of moving the community forward to overcome Ann Arbor's history with racism and prejudice that have caused important local perspectives to be marginalized from community conversations and decision-making process." A fifty person steering committee has been created to help

Groundcover Principles as a Statement of Solidarity with Humanity

From its inception, **Groundcover News** has approached all its activities with belief in the following principles, as written on our website:

- All people have the right to dignity.
- Diversity has intrinsic value.
- Poverty is political — systemic change is necessary.
- Building community is essential to social change.
- Political effectiveness requires staying power.
- Solutions to poverty must involve people who are directly affected.
- Risks are necessary to create positive change.
- Meeting people where they are honors their skills and potential.
- We are committed to quality, professionalism, and accountability in everything we do.

We feel our attachment to these principles even more strongly today. If they resonate with you too, and you are looking for a way to make a difference during these life-changing times, please join us as a volunteer, supporter, friend or Board Member. To let us know, email: contact@groundcovernews.com.



shape the approach to equitable engagement in Ann Arbor.

On June 18, 2021, the Washtenaw County government invited residents of the county to a Juneteenth Celebration held at the County Administration Building. Such a celebration of African American freedom would have been unthinkable during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s or even one generation ago in the early 1990s. Washtenaw County has come a long way! The progressive wing of the Board of Commissioners is committed to doing the right thing.

Author's note: I encourage our readers to browse through the January 2019 article titled, "Washtenaw County Equity Initiative: Implementation under the Watchful Eyes of Women."

◆ KROGER from page 2

the police with a fabricated story. Briggs left out all the details about the harassment the Three Ghosts were experiencing.

These men are constantly subject to harassment from their less vulnerable neighbors. Drivers are constantly yelling obscenities at John when he is flying a sign. Recently, John was riding down the side of the road on his scooter, when a truck swerved to run him off the road. He fell off the scooter, badly scraping up his arm and elbow and rolled over onto his backpack. Inside that backpack was his new puppy, Sabitha, who thankfully was unharmed.

Hostility and prejudice toward the homeless is common, and I do not doubt for a second that an angry property owner would make false accusations. Besides, no one has been able to provide evidence for any of the accusations made against these men, and we have a societal duty to listen to those who are vulnerable and marginalized.

Radiant Church told Briggs that the campers had damaged an electrical

box. This was easily explained by Chris, who said that the box had been poorly attached and fell off when they tried to plug their phones in to charge. After this incident, Radiant locked up the exterior electrical outlets. To me this seems like a misunderstanding that would have been easily resolved had Radiant made a greater effort to communicate with their homeless neighbors.

The final accusation was that homeless folks in general were stealing from Kroger and other businesses and residents. Again, no evidence was provided. Besides, if the homeless must steal to survive, shouldn't a corporation such as Kroger with their 38-billion dollars in assets have the ability and resources to work with the community to understand why needs aren't being met? Shouldn't they be able to come up with a solution better than shuffling people to another camp site where they will face the same problems?

The Three Ghosts have a right to exist, and to have a place to live and sleep. They were good stewards of their space. Yet they became further victimized by prejudice and

indifference. Rather than work towards a just arrangement, their neighbors harassed them and used a legal system biased towards powerful landowners to displace them. Given their immense wealth and power, Kroger is especially egregious in their actions of dismissing community members who want to come up with equitable solutions.

I encourage anyone reading this to avoid shopping at Kroger until they sincerely demonstrate significant support for the housing insecure people in our community. The eviction of the Three Ghosts is not the only recent socially irresponsible action by Kroger. Indeed.com reports that Kroger cashiers earn only \$9.18/hr — 17% below the national average. In May 2020, Kroger discontinued their \$2/hr COVID hero pay after only two months — despite the pleas from workers to extend it. In Long Beach, California, Kroger went so far as to shut down two stores rather than implement a \$4/hr COVID hero pay mandated by the city government. A recent lawsuit against a Kroger in Milford, Ohio contends that Kroger intentionally subjected an employee

to torturous conditions that were directly responsible for his suicide. Try shopping at a more responsible alternative such as Aldi's, Trader Joe's or the People's Food Co-op.

If Kroger had agreed to work with me and others to establish boundaries and mediate conflict with campers, I am confident that we could have come to a mutually beneficial arrangement.

I am interested in finding a business with suitable space that would be willing to try hosting a small camp on their property. A community group with members of the homeless community and their supporters would provide guidance and mediation for the business and the campers. If any business is interested in making this happen, or if any readers want to support this idea, or send ideas, comments or questions, please email me at jerivard@gmail.com. I also encourage readers to join or support Washtenaw Camp Outreach, whose members are focusing their efforts on ending evictions on city property. WCO can be reached on Facebook @ [washcampoutreach](https://www.facebook.com/washcampoutreach).

◆ NAMI from page 7

episodic mental health condition since I almost died from measles at age seven. I had to relearn how to talk and interact with other kids. I remember not being able to understand what my teacher was saying and taking a black crayon and aggressively coloring over a picture of many bright colors in an attempt to communicate what I had experienced.

I grew up to become a speech and language pathologist probably because I could relate to the difficulties posed by many speech and language pathologies. I wanted to understand how our brains work — how language and communication are possible — and help people at the same time.

When the office manager who mentored me moved on, I applied for the open position and was hired, becoming the second NAMI WC office manager. Now, some 16 years later, I still hold that position.

Alongside the nine staff members are the dedicated volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and talents to help make NAMI WC the vibrant organization that it is. One of the most rewarding things about my work at NAMI WC is the opportunity to engage with volunteers.

NAMI.

I learned NAMI WC had held a vigil at Washtenaw County Community Mental Health offices back in the early days of de-institutionalization as there were no community outreach or mental health services for people who were without housing and had mental health conditions. Impressed by this and other meaningful and noteworthy accomplishments, as well as NAMI's recognition and understanding of the importance of peer support and lived experience, I began volunteering at the NAMI WC office.

When the office manager who mentored me moved on, I applied for the open position and was hired, becoming the second NAMI WC office manager. Now, some 16 years later, I still hold that position.

Alongside the nine staff members are the dedicated volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and talents to help make NAMI WC the vibrant organization that it is. One of the most rewarding things about my work at NAMI WC is the opportunity to engage with volunteers.

Anonymous, parent of an adult child with a mental health condition

Fifteen years ago, my wonderful, gifted, intelligent adult child started hearing voices and became extremely paranoid. I didn't know where to turn and then a co-worker directed me to NAMI.

I spoke with Barb Higman in the NAMI WC office, and she talked about NAMI and the programs they offered for relatives and friends of people with mental illness. The Family-to-Family program was very helpful. They would occasionally bring in speakers such as doctors, police and social workers. Since so many people are not educated about mental illness it was difficult to talk about my son with others (relatives, friends, etc.) but in Family-to-Family meetings, everyone was comfortable discussing their loved one.

After many doctors, hospitalizations, and medications my child has found a semblance of normalcy. However, he will probably be on medications for the rest of his life. It is a good feeling to know that I have the support of my NAMI family. I appreciate all that NAMI does and therefore have been volunteering for over ten years.

Conclusion

Despite the challenge of COVID-19, NAMI Washtenaw County and Lend a Hand have continued to provide critical services to those with mental health conditions such as schizophrenia, clinical depression and bipolar disorder, all of which may include a dual-diagnosis of substance abuse. This work needs to be accomplished by those who are dealing with these issues themselves: There is indeed

"hope from those who know."

The group has emerged from the quarantine with enhanced problem-solving skills and research experience as well as improved communication and technological knowledge. Lend a Hand always welcomes new members of all ages and backgrounds who bring fresh insights. Our group is both proud and humbled to be a stepping-stone to the NAMI WC of the future, and we have so much more to contribute.

Lend a Hand looks forward to expanding our presence in Chelsea, Dexter, Grass Lake, Manchester and Stockbridge — our "Five Healthy Towns" — in coordination with the work that is being done by Washtenaw County Community Mental Health. We are also reaching out to residents of Whitmore Lake and Ypsilanti.

NAMI WC strives to help everyone in need of our specialized mental health services. We envision a world where all people affected by mental illness live healthy, fulfilling lives supported by a community that cares. Mental health matters and you are not alone.

www.namiwc.org

Email: office@namiwc.org

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